

RE: CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Chairman Genachowski:

I understand the FCC is proposing changes to VRS and as a child of deaf adults I am concerned that the proposed changes will negatively affect the Deaf and Hard of Hearing constituents that use these services.

We have finally created a venue where Deaf individuals can communicate on an equal basis with their hearing counterparts. Because of VRS the Deaf community has experienced the functional equivalence that was awarded to them when Congress passed Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The point was to make a phone system accessible to those who were at a disadvantage, and we have with VRS and it works.

The ADA mandates equal communication access for deaf people. Deaf people should have the same choices in equipment that hearing people have. Deaf people should also have the same choice in choosing their communication service that hearing people do. It is the FCC's responsibility to ensure functional equivalency in communication for all deaf Americans. Because of VRS, deaf Americans can compete in business. Because of VRS, deaf Americans can stay connected to family and friends. Because of VRS, deaf Americans have access to emergency 911 services. Do not undo what Congress approved and provided to the Deaf Community when they passed the ADA in 1990.

In addition to being raised in the Deaf community I have chosen to work as a video interpreter who uses sign language to relay Video Relay Service (VRS) calls between deaf and hearing people. Because of my life and my work with the deaf community, I understand first-hand how critical VRS communication is to deaf people and the hearing people with whom they communicate.

I understand the FCC is proposing changes to the VRS program. I am afraid these proposals will negatively impact the quality of service, interpreting, and equipment in use today. I am fortunate enough to work for a company that has designed videophones exclusively for our ASL consumers and the company I work for has also developed software that promotes a healthy work environment. The work of a Video interpreter is demanding and any changes that would interfere with the quality of equipment, software, environment or wages would drive many highly skilled interpreters to work in other arenas, creating a shortage in a field where we are struggling with staffing to current consumer needs. I do not consider your proposals to be a reasonable replacement for the high quality, unique VRS technology we have become accustomed to and I recommend we work together to find solutions that will insure healthy competition amongst providers that will keep VRS innovative and on par with the technological advances afforded to the hearing world.

I am opposed to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) Public Notice proposals to reduce VRS providers' compensation rates because I feel the proposals will have a negative impact on the quality of services, interpreting quality and equipment currently used by VRS

providers and consumers. It is my sincere belief that the actions recommended will eventually result in reduced access to VRS services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

When all is said and done at the end of the day Deaf Americans should have the same freedoms and choices that have become an expectation to those of us in the hearing world. Your decisions can cause progress to veer off in a direction that was never meant to go.

In your position you have to make many choices...some very important choices. The choices you make, will determine to a large extent, the happiness, or unhappiness of both consumers and providers of VRS services, because they will have to live with the consequences of your choices. Making perfect choices all the time is not possible but it is possible to make good choices we can live with and grow from.

In closing I ask that you determine a compensation structure that is fair and equitable to all VRS service providers, which encourages competition, consumer choice, and product and services innovation based incentive regulations and principles.

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